

NSC BRIEFING

15 October 1957

NEAR EAST DEVELOPMENTS

- I. Inside Syria, Akram Hawrani, the Arab Socialist leader, has been elected president of the chamber of deputies--a position equivalent to our vice-president. Should [] president Quwatli resign or flee the country, Hawrani would be his constitutional successor. 25X6
- A. Hawrani, an extreme Arab nationalist as well as a self-styled socialist, has been intensely anti-Western, but there is also apparently little love lost between him and the Communists, whom he has belittled as an insignificant force in Syrian politics.
1. Hawrani has been reported as one of those elements supporting the present regime who have been concerned by its excessive reliance on Soviet support.
 2. Hawrani has a long record of turning against regimes which he at first supported or even fathered, when they failed to live up to his ideals or follow his guidance.
- B. Hawrani's election, taken with the arrival of 500 to 1,000 Egyptian "volunteers," may have the effect of reasserting Syria's ties with Egypt and the Arabs while playing down somewhat its ties with the USSR.
- II. Lebanon is the Near Eastern state which currently feels most strongly the effect of Syria's radical nationalism and pro-Soviet orientation. Opposition elements inside the country, as well as Syria and Egypt, are pressing Lebanon to reverse its pro-American stand.

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- A. The position of the Lebanese foreign minister, noted Arab Christian Dr. Charles Malik, is being undercut. The government's opponents, acting through the foreign affairs committee of the Lebanese parliament, are trying to embarrass him by demanding a list of assurances regarding American policy toward Lebanon.
 - B. The pressure to turn Lebanon away from the West has been given a strong boost by the developments in the UN sessions in New York, where Malik has been trying to maintain a pro-Western stand while remaining in the Arab camp.
 - 1. Malik feels that the extreme statements made by the Saudi, Egyptian and Syrian delegates are creating an atmosphere that will result in the Arab states as a bloc supporting the Soviet rather than the West on many UN issues.
 - 2. Malik tends toward exaggeration, but illustrations of what he has in mind are already available in Iraq's new reluctance to co-sponsor the Western disarmament resolution.
 - C. More direct pressures, in the form of subversion, terrorism, economic warfare, have been and probably will be put on Lebanon by Syria and Egypt.
 - 1. Last week Syrians suddenly concentrated troops on North Lebanon border.
 - 2. Egypt and Syria have refused to make usual purchases of Lebanese apple crop.

III. King Saud, now on unofficial holiday in Lebanon--his state visit lasted only three days--is still trying to moderate Syrian extremism by private persuasion. Yusuf Yasin, Saudi counsellor, quoted to Ambassador Heath an alleged Arab proverb to the effect that if the weapon of generosity will do the trick, it is a great mistake to use the sword.

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A. Saud may plan to try "generosity" on Syrian chief of staff

Bizri.

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B. Saud's course may be increasingly influenced by his advisors.

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